

REMARKS

Claims 87-100 are now pending in this application, of which claims 87, 88, 94, and 98 are in independent form. No claims have been amended, cancelled, or added in this Reply.

Summary of Examiner Interview

Applicants express their appreciation for courtesies extended to their representative, James C. Larsen, in an in-person interview conducted June 25, 2009. Examiner Minh D. A and Supervising Patent Examiner Douglas Owens attended the interview.

Applicants' representative reviewed the presently claimed invention(s) and the disclosures of the prior art, then discussed the failure of the Shin and Lin references to disclose a pair of inverter transformers positioned such that "one inverter transformer of the pair of inverter transformers is positioned in close proximity to one end of the fluorescent tube and the other inverter transformer of the pair of inverter transformers is positioned in close proximity to the other end of the fluorescent tube", as variously recited in the present independent claims.

Examiners agreed that the positions of the transformers in relation to ends of a fluorescent tube are not disclosed nor mere design choices. Moreover, Examiners agreed that combination of the Shin reference with the Honbo reference would change principle of operation of Shin. Finally, the Examiners agreed to withdraw the rejections based on various combinations of Shin, Lin, and Honbo. Our detailed arguments are presented below.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(e)

The Office Action rejects claims 87-88, 91-93 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(e) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,661,181 issued to Shin (hereinafter "Shin") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,087,757 issued to Honbo et al. (hereinafter "Honbo") or in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,570,344 issued to Lin (hereinafter "Lin"). (The Examiner applies Lin to these claims on page 4 of the Office Action.)

The Office Action also rejects claims 89-90, and 94-100 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(e) as unpatentable over Shin in view of Honbo, and further in view Lin.

As discussed in the Interview, Shin and Lin both rely on one end of each fluorescent tube being connected either to a virtual ground (by means of phase relationships) or actual ground. Thus, neither reference discloses “a pair of inverter transformers for converting input voltages into high voltages and supplying high voltages having opposite phases to the ends of the fluorescent tube”, as recited in claims 87 and 88. Moreover, such connection thus prohibits combination with Honbo, which is asserted in the Office Action to provide opposite voltages to ends of a fluorescent tube. As described in MPEP §2143.01(VI), if a combination of references would “change the principle of operation of the prior art invention being modified ... the teachings of the references are not sufficient to render the claims *prima facie* obvious.” Independent claims 87 and 88 are thus not anticipated or rendered as obvious by the combined references of record. Claims 89-93 depend from claim 87 or 88 and are thus believed to be in condition for allowance for at least the same reasons. Withdrawal of the rejection and reconsideration of the claims are respectfully requested.

All of the independent claims (87, 88, 94, 98) recite a disposition of inverter circuits in relation to ends of a fluorescent tube that is not disclosed in the prior art of reference. As discussed in the Interview, such disposition serves a disclosed purpose which results inherently from the positions recited in the claims. The prior art does not disclose or make obvious such positions. Dependent claims 89-93, 95-97, and 99-100 are believed to be in condition for allowance for at least the same reasons as their base claims. Withdrawal of the rejections and reconsideration of claims 88-100 are respectfully requested.

Conclusion

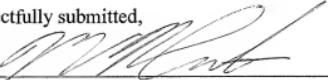
In view of the above remarks, applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact James C. Larsen Reg. No. 58,565 at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37.C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

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